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SUBJECT: UGANDA: Local resources meet the needs of Kenyan refugees

REF: KAMPALA 30

¶1. (SBU) On January 7, 2008, Refugee Assistant spoke with Ugandan Red Cross officer, Will Obeka and to GoU Refugee Officer David Kazungu regarding the influx of Kenyans into Uganda. The Uganda Red Cross led the national response to the current influx of Kenyan refugees in Uganda's Malaba, Musafa, and Busia districts. The Red Cross, supported by ICRC, and the government of Uganda provided food and non-food items to an estimated 662 families, 2292 individuals. Refugees were finding shelter with locals and making homes in ad hoc transit camps on school properties within two kilometers of the Kenya-Uganda border. OCHA and UNHCR were monitoring events and preparing a response. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Uganda responded well and with compassion to the influx of what the UN estimated to be 3194 Kenyans into the country in the last week. The Kenyans, mostly women and small children, identified themselves as Kikuyu fleeing the ethnic violence in the border districts. New arrivals were in good condition, with only a few injuries reported to local medical officials.

¶3. (SBU) As of January 7, 2008, The GoU and Ugandan Red Cross delivered 6.5 metric tons of food, and each household received two jerry cans, two cooking pots, two mosquito nets, eating utensils for five, and three blankets. The refugees were finding it difficult to find and acquire firewood for cooking. So far, the distributions were coming from Red Cross stores, previously allocated to flood relief, and from locally purchased food paid for by GoU emergency funds. UNHCR deployed an assessment team to the region to assist in status determination and to assess refugee needs. WFP was coordinating with the GoU on possible interventions.

¶4. (SBU) The government of Uganda moved registered refugees into a school grounds where Ugandan Red Cross volunteers provided food and basic shelter. Local officials conducted a census of arriving refugees to determine need and to establish prima facie cases for refugee status. That information was shared with the Office of the Prime Minister in Kampala for final determination and communication to concerned donors.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: The refugees present location, two kilometers from the border is not optimum. However, there is some sign that refugee families cross into Kenya on a regular basis to assess the situation. Moving them may prolong their stay in Uganda. Local officials were concerned that a prolonged refugee stay in the region might provoke resentment among Ugandans in the district.

¶6. (SBU) Comment continued: National resources appear sufficient to meet the present crisis. On January 9, WFP will

meet with GoU refugee authorities to discuss how WFP could be helpful in the crisis. WFP is concerned that the distribution of more food aid may serve as a pull factor. Additionally, WFP/Uganda currently only has a six-week pipeline for its existing obligations under the Uganda PRRO and the Country Program. End comment. Chritton